

Weaning from the bottle

The first step to weaning from the bottle is learning to drink from a cup. Offer a regular cup as soon as your baby is ready, sometime between 6 and 9 months. By 12 months, most children can drink from a cup all the time. Bottles are not recommended after 14 months.



When is my child ready for a cup?

Watch for signs that tell you when your baby is ready to use a cup. Babies are ready to learn to drink from a cup when they:

- ☐ Take a bottle without help.
- ☐ Show interest in what others are eating and drinking.
- ☐ Can pull themselves up.
- ☐ Feed themselves.



Why is a cup better than a bottle?

Fewer ear infections. If your baby drinks from a bottle while lying down, the liquid goes to the back of the throat, close to the inside of the ear. This is how ear infections can begin.

Healthy teeth. Weaning can help keep your baby's teeth healthy. Tooth decay can happen when teeth are frequently exposed to liquids containing sugar. Formula, milk, juice and fruit drinks all contain sugar. If your child falls asleep with a bottle or sips from a bottle or sippy cup all day, this can cause tooth decay.

Healthy blood. Milk is low in iron. If babies drink large amounts from a bottle, they eat fewer foods high in iron and other important vitamins and minerals. Your baby needs to eat a variety of foods to grow.

Increased independence. Older babies like to imitate others and will feel more "grown up" when drinking from a cup.

Check the weaning tips you plan to use:

- ☐ Offer sips of water from a child-sized cup when you are drinking a glass of water.
- ☐ Put formula in a cup at mealtime instead of a bottle.
- ☐ Offer snacks such as cottage cheese, cheese, plain yogurt, whole wheat crackers or fruit before a nap.
- ☐ Sing, read, hold or rock your child instead of giving a bottle to offer comfort.
- ☐ Offer only water in the bottle and serve formula and juice only from a cup.
- ☐ Offer a pacifier if your baby needs to suck between feedings.
- ☐ Hide or give away all of the bottles on the target date for weaning.
- ☐ Provide comfort at bedtime with a favorite blanket or stuffed animal.

Remember:

- ☐ The longer a child uses a bottle the harder it will be to wean.
- ☐ The key to weaning is patience and understanding.
- ☐ Share your weaning plans with all of your child's caregivers so everyone is doing the same thing.

I plan to wean my child by_____.

